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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Director, Office of Legislative Liaison 14 December 1984

NOTE TO: Executive Director

o Hamilton/Stevens/Other Congressional briefing(s): Oversight section.

STAT

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Oversight

DCIs/DDCIs since Colby have acknowledged the validity and protection to the Agency of Congressional oversight. Thus, as surrogates, HPSCI/SSCI must receive the information required: no stonewalling, timely receipt, avoidance of blindsiding, consistency, speaking with one voice - all are important.

Both houses theoretically were set up to be representative and deliberative. Generally, HPSCI/SSCI have not focused much on the latter but have done reasonably well on the former (public support for rebuilding intelligence reflected in Congressional actions over the last 4 years).

But, the oversight system is susceptible to shock, thus it is events driven, not driven by articulated principles. And events can strain and disrupt the system easily.

Perception of cooperation is as important as substance - confrontational style gives the impression of holding back. Exaggeration or evasion on minor issues undermines credibility on all issues. And the issues should be addressed, whether or not the questions are correctly framed to get at them.

Basic Agency concern is not political, not budget-strategy oriented, but source protection and leaks avoidance. No serious difficulty until Nicaragua. Growing tendency for individual members to take information from classified briefings specifically for TV appearance or press comment is a major concern.

Related is the now fairly widespread tendency for oversight members and others to respond, publicly, to media allegations before the facts are determined and to assume the worst in follow-up with us. The morale impact here is devastating; the impact on cooperation in any investigative pursuits is considerable.

Which leads to staff relationships and procedural arrangements. Major staff concern appears to be the time it takes for the Agency to respond to questions. We're attempting to speed up internal coordination and sign off. The other side is reasonableness - in deadlines and multiplicity and redundancy of questions. This is a function of staff size and self-descipline.

Positive side of oversight, besides ensuring that the nation has a strong intelligence capability, is to protect, buffer and speak for the Agency, both as surrogates within the House and Senate and with the press and public. To do so, obviously, requires us, for our part, to have credibility.

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Of less concern, except for its manhour impact and managerial frustration, is the ever-increasing requirement for more detail and approval for low-level line management actions. This obtains not only in the programming and budget context but in gotcha pursuit of smoking guns in a prosecutorial context. We are up to our eyeballs in CA reporting procedures, in accounting for U.S. persons involvement, in reprogramming controls, in skepticism concerning use of the Director's special authority in personnel and money management.

As to the latter, and as further argument for reasonableness in dealing with staff questions and reporting procedures, there are in reality four oversight committees. As VanWagenen of HAC tells us: if you don't believe it, try to take an authorization bill to the bank without an appropriation chop.

This is a golden opportunity to start off fresh with new chairmen, many new members and with the recent rash of rogue elephant allegations disproved and behind us. Goals during the 99th Congress should be mutual credibility, stability and invisibility.

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